

The Architectural Remains
Unit B, Sub-Units 59 & 73
Jamestown Island, Virginia

Jamestown Co.

HABS No. VA-27

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Philip N. Stern, District Officer
21 Law Building, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

THE ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS
UNIT B, SUB-UNITS 59 & 73
Jamestown Island, James City County
Virginia

Owner: National Park Service,

Date of Erection: 17th Century.

Architect: Unknown.

Builder: Unknown.

Present Condition: Foundation only; recovered, 1935.

Number of Stories: Unknown.

Materials of Construction: Brick.

Other Existing Records: None.

Additional Data: (See following pages)

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF REMAINS

The foundation is located on the shore of Jamestown Island between the ferry pier and the enclosure of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. About four hundred feet to the northwest of this foundation is the brick church tower of 1639 period. The exact location of the foundation is given on the title sheet of the Historic American Buildings Survey drawings. The name, "Architectural Remains, Unit B, Sub-units 59 & 73", is of a temporary character and will be replaced later by the proper historical designation.

The foundation is in the shape of a rectangle fifty-two feet long by sixteen feet wide.¹ At different places the walls have disappeared without a trace, or have become brick-bats, or have decomposed into brick dust. The two long walls lie parallel to the river bank, one of them lying on the beach and the other set half way up the bank. Thus the bottom of the wall in the bank is some three feet above the bottom of the wall on the beach.

The lower or south wall, which is on the beach, is 13-3/4" wide and averages three brick courses in height. The bottom course rests on yellow sand-clay and is 1.26 feet above mean high water. The eastern end of this wall forms a clear cut corner, but just a few feet to the west of the corner the wall has decayed into rotten brick. A few feet farther on the wall again becomes solid and definite. The western end of the wall has been destroyed so that there is no evidence of a corner. An area of brick-bats remains, however. Near the middle of the wall on the south side was found what appeared to be a projection of two bricks, but after examination these bricks were found not to be bonded with the wall.

The upper or north wall, which lies half way up the bank, is 13-3/4" wide and averages six brick courses in height. The bottom course on the north side is of brick, but on the south side it is field stone projecting an inch or two from the face of the brick. The bonding of this wall is very irregular, most of the bricks being half-bricks or broken bricks with headers showing, and not like the regular English bond of the south wall.

Very little is left of the end walls of the foundation. The

1 - See Sheet #1 for exact dimensions.

west wall has entirely disappeared except for 33-1/2" of it at the northwest corner of the foundation. The bottom course of this short strip of wall makes a step down to conform with the slope. At the very point where this step down begins, the wall breaks out one and half inches. No reason is known for this break. The east sixteen foot end wall has several feet missing in the lower half. The upper part of the wall has a bottom course which makes two steps down to conform with the slope. Thus it will be seen that the building was built on a slope, but whether this was the old river bank or not is not known.

~~Along the present bank to the west of the foundation are the brick steps. The bricks lie flat, side by side without mortar. Around the steps is a wide area of brick-bats. What connection these steps had with the foundation can only be guessed at the present time.~~

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FRAGMENTS

The fragments uncovered from this foundation were tiles for the most part. Hardware, glass and lead came, and slate were scarce. What interesting objects did come to light, such as lock plates and glazed tiles, were found close to the wall in the bank.

Hardware: Fragments of four locks were found. The largest lock, six inches long, has only the plate remaining and that in a badly rusted condition. There was also uncovered what is believed to be a chest lock, which is almost square and has curved sides. Still another lock is rectangular and has fancy curves on the short sides, like a lock found in the foundation in Unit A, sub-unit 39, Jamestown.

The most interesting fragment of wrought iron work is the wedge-shaped padlock which was uncovered just west of the foundation and south of the brick steps. On one face of the padlock is a rounded ridge running down the center of the lock and on the reverse is a flat ridge doing the same thing.

Bricks:

The bricks of the upper and lower walls of the foundation differ in size, colour and texture. The brick at the western end of the lower wall average 4" to $4\frac{1}{2}$ " by $2\frac{1}{4}$ " by $8\frac{1}{2}$ " to $8\frac{3}{4}$ ". The bricks at the eastern end of this wall average slightly larger in size - $4\frac{1}{2}$ " by $2\frac{1}{2}$ " by 9". These bricks are soft and sandy. One sample taken from this lower wall is larger than usual, being $9\frac{1}{2}$ " long, and is so soft that the sand crumbles away in your hand. The colour of these bricks is bright orange-red. No traces of mortar were found in the joints.

The typical brick in the upper wall is $2\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{3}{4}$ " to $4\frac{1}{4}$ " by $8\frac{1}{2}$ " to $8\frac{3}{4}$ ". The colour is a deep red and red-purple. While most of the bricks are burned harder than those in the lower wall, there was one sample brought to the field laboratory which was of pure clay, of a red-chocolate colour. On the bottom of this brick there are some small grains of sand, showing that it had been laid on a sanded bed when made.

The mortar joint in the upper wall averages 1" wide and four brick courses make 13".

Stone:

The field stone under the southern half of the upper wall is of two kinds: sandstone and granito. These stones project out from the face of the wall for an inch or two.

Tile:

The tiles from this foundation are all of the flat variety, no tiles of the curved variety having been found. The flat tiles have two holes at the upper ends for nails, are $5\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and average a little less than $5/8$ " in thickness. The original length of the tile is unknown since we were unable to piece together a whole one. The upper surface is smooth and has parallel grooved marks running the length of the tile. The bottom is rough and sanded. The colours are red, blue, and orange, with a wide variety of tints.

HYPOTHESIS

So little remains of this foundation that so far no clue has been discovered which might indicate the appearance and the date of the original building.

Mr. A. L. Ayers, a former superintendent of the Jamestown property of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, made note in 1927 that in the month of February of that year he saw a foundation wall of cobblestones and tumbled brick in the water immediately in front of, and parallel to the long sides of, this foundation. If this was so, the building had two rooms (exclusive of possible wooden partitions) in its lowest story.

The elongated shape of the remaining room of the foundation (about 15 feet by 51 feet) indicates that the building was not a residence, since rooms of such shape were not used in residences, but was a warehouse or other place for storage purposes.¹ No window casements, and a negligible amount of window glass came from the foundation, a fact lending further to the belief that the building was not a residence. The poor grade of bricks in the upper wall (mostly half and broken bricks) also would indicate that the building was not one of the "show places" of the colony.

The roof probably had flat tiles, since a large amount of flat tiles in fragmentary form was found. Only one piece of slate came to light and there were no curved tiles. Cobblestones (in the upper wall of the foundation) had been used in another building at Jamestown. The foundation wall of the church, which Samuel Yonge identifies as having been built about 1617, has this same type of cobblestone footing.

The difference of three feet in the levels of the upper and lower walls as well as the stepping down of the end walls show that the building was erected on a slope. The brick steps to the west of the foundation also indicate a slope. Whether this slope approximately coincides with the old river bank is not known, although Samuel Yonge shows the old shoreline practically unchanged in his map of "James City".

1 - There were warehouses at Jamestown, since John Chew had one in 1624 (Va. Hist. Mag., Vol xix, p. 142).